

**TESTIMONY OF SARAH A. McDANIEL,
PRESIDENT OF PFLAG PORTLAND MAINE CHAPTER
IN OPPOSITION TO LD 380**

Judiciary Committee, Room 438, May 8, 2025 3:00 p.m.

Good afternoon, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and Members of the Judiciary Committee. Thank you for holding a hearing on these important bills, all of which I urge you to oppose.

My name is Sarah A. McDaniel. I currently reside in New Gloucester, formerly of Gorham. In my career I am a land conservation attorney practicing at my own lawfirm in North Yarmouth. Most importantly for today's hearing, I am mother of a transgender son who now lives in Portland and am the President of PFLAG's Portland Maine Chapter.

WHO IS PFLAG?

When my son first came out to me a decade ago, the summer before he started at Gorham High School, I turned to PFLAG for education and support on this unanticipated parenting journey.

If you are not familiar with PFLAG, they are the country's oldest ally group, begun in 1972 when a mother marched in the first New York pride parade in support of her gay son – a monumental show of love. **That grew a movement of parents, friends and family of LGBTQ+ people working to protect their loved ones from discrimination.** Fifty years later, PFLAG is now a national nonprofit with staffed offices in DC that works across the country by a series of local volunteer-run chapters, currently numbering in the hundreds.

PFLAG Portland is currently Maine's only active chapter, with a focus on southern Maine. Other chapters have ebbed and flowed with volunteer capacity in Houlton and in Waterville but the greater Portland chapter has been steady and active in Maine since 1995. Since covid, our chapter's monthly support meetings have stayed on Zoom as we are better able to help families from all across the state, including those who cannot easily get into downtown Portland.

I've been on the board for about 7 years, president for the last 4. In this time, we have been able to **serve on the order of 400 Maine families**. A large proportion of these are families seeking to better understand and support their transgender loved ones, often youth.

In addition to our monthly peer support groups, we have been invited by faith leaders to speak at their churches and help them becoming more welcoming to the LGBTQ+ community. We join panels on LGBTQ+ issues when invited by school groups. And we are a voice for parents when policies that may harm their children are moving through the legislature, like today.

One point that I hope you understand as you consider all the testimony you have heard today is that **parents of transgender youth are scared for the safety of their children**. This committee has heard the anti-doxxing bills, so you are aware of the real dangers Maine children face in this increasingly contentious political environment. The bravery and courage of the people who come today to testify in person, or who share their stories with you in writing should be applauded. Yet for everyone who speaks up, there are many more parents, teachers, friends, youth who also want these bills to fail, but are not able to share their identifying information to vocally oppose the bills out of fear of their families being targeted for violence.

PFLAG is here to speak for them.

LD 380 would repeal the language enacted in 2023 that allows minors diagnosed with gender dysphoria who are over the age of 16 from consenting to gender-affirming hormone therapy in certain conditions with informed written consent.

In addition to all of the reasons that Maine should resist falling backwards in its human rights protections discussed earlier this afternoon, this bill should be defeated because it will harm our youth.

One important thing to note is that the law that LD 380 seeks to repeal **only applies to non-surgical and medically-necessary care ---specifically, hormone therapy**.

I have direct experience with transgender youth getting gender affirming hormone therapy as my son was in his teens when we moved forward with his physical transition.

My son started hormone therapy – taking testosterone – at age 15 with his parent’s consent. Before he had come out and began his transition, he was depressed and engaging in self-harm behavior. **Gender dysphoria is real**, and is exacerbated in the teens as the bodily changes from puberty widen the gap between a trans person’s physical appearance and the gender that they know themselves to be.

It takes a while after starting for hormone therapy to begin to make a difference ...this is a long journey, not an overnight makeover. And if a person were to stop taking hormones, the physical changes in their body mostly return to its prior condition. This is one of the reversible steps of gender affirming care. **I know that the informed consent process that Maine’s pediatric endocrinologists provide is extremely thorough**, includes required mental health therapy and appropriately highlights the known and the unknown risks of hormone use.

Offsetting any risks, **the benefits of hormone therapy to a youth diagnosed with gender dysphoria is significant**. As I saw with my own son, being able to start what is a long journey without delay had a huge positive impact on his mental health. It is empowering to direct your own health care. Suicide risk among transgender youth who lack supportive parents is extraordinarily high. By empowering the older teens with autonomy over their own bodies, they are empowered to take control of their health care. Sixteen and Seventeen year olds deserve the bodily autonomy, with the guidance of medical doctors, to move forward with their own health care.

The statute in place now has sufficient safeguards to prevent the dangers that those who wish to repeal it are speculating about.

I request everyone on this Committee to vote NO on LD 380; this bill OUGHT NOT TO PASS. I am pleased to answer questions today or attend a workshop if additional information will be helpful.

Thank you for your time.

Sarah A. McDaniel
President, PFLAG Portland Maine Chapter